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FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0198
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
INFO RUEHZM/GCC COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS RIYADH 000311

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR E, EEB/FO, AND NEA/ARP(HARRIS)
STATE PLEASE PASS USTR(BUNTIN), SBA, AND USPCPC

E.O.12958:N/A

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SUBJECT: COMMERCE MINISTER WANTS TO ATTEND MARCH 2 TIFA OPENING,
POSSIBLE BROADER CONSULTATIONS

REF: RIYADH 226, 08 RIYADH 1676

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED -- PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph four.

12. (SBU) Abdullah Mahmoud, the Private Secretary of Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdallah bin Zainal Alireza called the A/DCM February 15 to inform the USG that the Minister wanted to participate in the opening of the March 2-6 Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) talks in Washington. Abdullah realized that the Minister's counterparts at the Department of Commerce and USTR have not been confirmed yet but intimated that the SAG might postpone the TIFA talks until a ministerial opening was possible.

13. (SBU) The A/DCM replied it would be a pity to again postpone the oft-delayed TIFA talks, which were scheduled for the subministerial level. The A/DCM promised, however, to convey the Minister's wishes to Washington.

Comment

14. (SBU) Alireza is not only one of King Abdullah's closest advisors on economic matters, but he also is among Saudi Arabia's most energetic "next generation" of leaders gradually taking over from generally long-serving predecessors (he was appointed to his current position in March 2008). The Minister has approached us previously about meeting with U.S. counterparts at USDOC, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, and U.S. Small Business Administration to consult about establishing analogous agencies in the Kingdom (reftels). We most recently advised the Minister to undertake such a trip in the spring. Abdullah did not specifically request such broader consultations with the TIFA meeting, but we presume the Minister would welcome such an opportunity.

Action request

14. (SBU) Post requests Washington's guidance on how to respond to the Minister's request. One possibility would be to have someone of the secretary/deputy level rank participate in the TIFA opening, in lieu of the USDOC Secretary or U.S. Trade Representative.

MUENCH